



Board of County Commissioners
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March 7, 2014

Letter – Expression of Interest
VIA ECFS

Chairman Thomas Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Jonathan Chambers
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

**Re: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Experiments
Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90**

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners, and Mr. Chambers:

This letter is to express interest from the County of Franklin, North Carolina in participating in the Rural Broadband Experiments announced at the January 30th FCC Open Meeting. Our proposal offers the opportunity for a uniquely structured project that could provide a model that exemplifies how the close relationship and cooperation with telecommunications providers and local government can increase economic development and educational opportunities to improve lives in rural areas.

Background

The Franklin County, North Carolina project will require the cooperation of a telecommunications partner so that we will be in compliance with North Carolina legislation. Regarding what legal authority the County of Franklin has to offer broadband, G.S. 153A-349.60 provides that counties may provide grants to unaffiliated providers of high speed internet service for the purpose of expanding service in unserved areas.

Franklin County is located adjacent to Raleigh, Wake County and is part of the globally recognized Research Triangle Region. Raleigh has and continues to receive recognition as one of the fastest growing areas in the country. There may be opportunities for telecommunications providers to work with existing providers and infrastructure to enhance the capacity of Franklin County's broadband infrastructure.

Our location and our aggressive approach to improving the lives of our citizens has helped make Franklin County one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina. However, much of our County has extensive land with agriculture still a mainstay of our economy. This large rural area creates challenges attracting broadband deployment if viewed from a business perspective of return on investment.

Thus, we see this as an opportunity to attract telecommunications companies to increase broadband deployment. Many of our students, and even some of our State legislators, live in the more rural areas of the County and today, experience limited broadband service. Franklin County is a strong advocate that broadband access can change lives and enrich economic opportunities.

State/ Telecommunications/ Support for Project

We now come to you offering the chance to create a model of partnership between local government following the guidelines of G.S. 153A-349.60 and an unaffiliated telecommunications company to demonstrate how lives in a rural area can be improved with broadband deployment. Franklin County would provide a grant as specified in the background section earlier to a telecommunications company to develop the specifics of the project and deploy the broadband. We have begun conversations with telecommunications companies to gauge their interest and feedback has been extremely positive. We have also spoken with NC Broadband and will continue to work with them on this initiative to maintain their support.

Geographic Territory

We have the following census blocks which have been identified as eligible for funding per the information we found online regarding this funding. While there is some existing infrastructure that telecommunications companies could use, you will see there is significant opportunity to increase broadband coverage.

These are the census blocks that qualify in Franklin County:

NC,37069,Franklin,37069060100,131,3,43481.09

NC,37069,Franklin,37069060200,87,1,44306.45

NC,37069,Franklin,37069060301,2,0,1423.49

NC,37069,Franklin,37069060401,10,0,5439.96

NC,37069,Franklin,37069060700,233,2,71953.3

We have attached a map that overlays these census blocks in our County and you will see the widespread need in Franklin County. (Please note we created this map utilizing our GIS department and if we have misinterpreted any information, please feel free to let us know.)

Proposed Technology

Since Franklin County would provide the grant to the telecommunications company, we would rely on the expertise of the telecommunications company to design the appropriate technology.

Project Timeline

The timeline would be facilitated and determined by the telecommunications company who would receive the grant from Franklin County.

Thank you for considering our Expression of Interest in your decisions about the amount of funding that will be allocated in the Rural Broadband Experiments. As longtime advocates of rural broadband deployment, we commend the FCC in this effort to connect rural communities and are ready to help you close the digital divide with our unique proposal.

Respectfully submitted,



Sidney E. Dunston, Chairman
Franklin County Board of Commissioners